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Physician faces charges of Reckless Homicide for overprescribing prescription drugs

Dr. John K. Sturman accused of providing lethal doses to patients

(Indianapolis, Ind.) Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry announced today that charges have been filed against Dr. John K. Sturman for overprescribing narcotics for pain management resulting in patient deaths. Sturman has been charged with three counts of Reckless Homicide (C Felonies) and 16 counts of Issuing Invalid Prescription Drugs by a Practitioner (D Felonies). Dr. Sturman operated a clinic at the Indiana University Hospital, but lost his admitting privileges in 2012 after he failed to complete medical charting and documentation of patient visits. Charges are a result of an investigation by the Marion County Prosecutor's Office Grand Jury Division, the Indiana Attorney General's Licensing Enforcement Section, and the Indiana Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit.

A probable cause affidavit filed in support of the charges alleges from 2008 to 2012 Dr. Sturman prescribed large amounts of medication for patient pain management that was outside the usual course of medical care. After complaints filed by two former patients and a local addictions counselor, an investigation began in 2012 and revealed Dr. Sturman's prescribing practices did not establish a legitimate medical foundation for the use of high dose narcotics. A report summarizing the controlled substances patients were prescribed and the practitioner who prescribed them was reviewed by investigators and revealed at least three patients died from drug intoxication, overdose, or related causes of death. In those instances, patients had filled a prescription from Dr. Sturman within 30 days prior to death.

It is further alleged that Dr. Sturman demonstrated a prescriptive pattern of high dose narcotics for addiction and not the treatment of chronic pain. Prescribing practices reveals a large number of prescriptions for medication combinations, including the frequent prescribing of a combination known as "the holy trinity."

"Overprescribing pain medication is not only unethical, but reckless," Prosecutor Terry Curry stated. "Addiction to pain medication is a widespread problem, and physicians and medical personnel who enable and endanger addicted patients should be held accountable."

"It's imperative that we crack down on overprescribing of prescription drugs that is a contributing factor in the drug abuse epidemic in our state," said Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller, who co-chairs the [Indiana Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Task Force](#). "I'm pleased to work with Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry's Office to address this serious public health and safety issue. Far too many Hoosier lives are being lost to drug addiction and overdose."

An initial hearing is expected to be set in criminal court 6.

A charge of a crime is merely an accusation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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